



# MAYOR AND COUNCIL AGENDA

NO. 4

DEPT.: City Manager's Office /  
STAFF CONTACT: Linda Moran

DATE PREPARED: April 7, 2005  
FOR MEETING OF: April 25, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Rockville 2005 Citizen Survey Report of Results

**RECOMMENDATION:** Based on the review of the 2005 Citizen Survey Report of Results and the 2005 Citizen Survey Implementation Plan, staff recommends the Mayor and Council direct staff to:

- Proceed with carrying out the 2005 Survey Implementation Plan. Execution of the survey implementation plan will involve communicating the survey results to residents and employees; departments analyzing their results; and the creation of department action plans that will guide efforts in making adjustments and improvements to programs and services.
- Provide a Citizen Survey Update in September of 2005 that will contain the results of the department's analysis of their survey results and the 2005 Citizen Survey department action plans.

## DISCUSSION:

The National Research Center, Inc (NRC) completed the 2005 Rockville Citizen Survey data collection and analysis and submitted the Report of Results. NRC will present a general overview and also present a small selection of survey results pertaining to citizen's perceptions of general community conditions. NRC and staff will be available to answer questions the Mayor and Council may have concerning the survey results and the implementation plan.

The survey period spanned approximately five weeks from January 14 through February 25, 2005. A total of 1,092 surveys were completed which yielded a response rate of 38%. While this rate was four percentage points lower than the 2003 survey (42%), this is considered a good response rate. Citizen survey response rates across the nation typically range from 25% - 40%. NRC indicated the slightly lower response rate could be the result of the extra page of questions that were added this year that increased the length of the instrument from seven to eight pages.

A complete presentation of responses to all survey questions is provided in the attached "Report of Results." The questions on the survey were evaluative in that they asked the respondent to rate services and programs on a four-point scale where four was the highest rating and one was the lowest. The results of the survey, however, are reported on a common scale ranging from 0-100 where 0 is the lowest and 100 is the highest rating. The report also includes the responses by percentages for each question. The conversion of the data to the 100-point scale allows for NRC to make normative comparisons of services and programs to other jurisdictions across the nation. For the data to be meaningful, it must be compared to similar services in other jurisdictions. It is not an "apples to apples" comparison to compare different services within a jurisdiction. Comparison data to the 2001 and 2003 survey results are included in the report as well as normative comparisons to

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other jurisdictions for the 2005 data.

Some rules of thumb to keep in mind when reading the report are as follows:

- For comparisons of similar questions between 2005 to 2003 or 2005 to 2001, the number that signifies statistical significance between years is a difference of four or more points.
- For normative comparisons of service ratings in 2005 for Rockville and the nation, differences of four or more points are considered statistically significant. When the differences between the ratings received and the normative comparisons are three points or less, they are considered to be "similar to the norm." When the differences are four points or more, they are indicated as "above the norm" or "below the norm."
- For those survey result items that do not include a bar (on the graph) that represents the national norm, normative data is not available. In this case it is because the question is not asked in at least five jurisdictions.
- In 2005 residents were asked for the first time to rate both the quality and importance of several sets of items. For these sets of questions, the report contains a matrix that assigns services to either high quality (above the normative comparison) or of lower quality (similar to or below the norm) and by importance.

**Next Steps:** Staff will move forward with executing the survey implementation plan, which includes each department conducting a detailed review of the results and making changes, adjustments, and improvements to programs and services as well as communicating the survey results to residents and employees. In addition, in September of 2005, staff will provide a Citizen Survey 2005 Update, which will include the department action plans. The action plans will contain details on the specific steps departments will take to make changes, adjustments, and enhancements to programs and services. Action plans will be incorporated as part of the City Manager's Quarterly Operations Review meetings, which will begin in the last quarter of FY 2005.

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**PREPARED BY:** Linda Moran *Linda Moran*

*4/20/05*

**APPROVED BY:** *Catherine Tuck Parrish*  
Catherine Tuck Parrish, Assistant City Manager

**DATE:** *4/20/05*

**APPROVED BY:** *Scott Ullery*  
Scott Ullery, City Manager

**DATE:** *4/19/05*

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**LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Attachment A - Rockville Citizen Survey Results Memorandum
  2. Attachment B - 2005 Survey Implementation Plan
  3. Attachment C - Rockville 2005 Citizen Survey Report of Results
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April 18, 2005



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Mayor and Council

VIA: Scott Ullery, City Manager  
Catherine Tuck Parrish, Assistant City Manager *CTP*

FROM: Linda Moran, Council Support Specialist *LM*

SUBJECT: Rockville 2005 Citizen Survey Results

The National Research Center, Inc (NRC) completed the 2005 Rockville Citizen Survey data collection and analysis and submitted the Report of Results. The Rockville 2005 Citizen Survey Report of Results is included as part of the packet of materials for the upcoming Worksession (Attachment C). NRC will make a presentation highlighting the results of the survey to the Mayor and Council on at the April 25, 2005 Worksession. NRC and staff will be available to answer questions the Mayor and Council may have concerning the survey results.

The survey period spanned approximately five weeks from January 14 through February 25, 2005. A total of 1,092 surveys were completed which yielded a response rate of 38%. While this rate was four percentage points lower than the 2003 survey (42%), this is considered a good response rate. Citizen survey response rates across the nation typically range from 25% - 40%. NRC indicated the slightly lower response rate could be the result of the extra page of questions that were added this year that increased the length of the instrument to eight pages.

NRC developed a comprehensive report and analysis of the 2005 survey data. The questions on the survey were evaluative in that they asked the respondent to rate services and programs on a four-point scale where four was the highest rating and one was the lowest. The results of the survey, however, are reported on a common scale ranging from 0-100 where 0 is the lowest and 100 is the highest rating. The report also includes the responses by percentages for each question. The conversion of the data to the 100-point scale allows for NRC to make normative comparisons of services and programs to other jurisdictions across the nation. For the data to be meaningful, it must be compared to similar services in other jurisdictions. It is not an "apples to apples" comparison to compare different services within a jurisdiction. Comparison data to the 2001 and 2003 survey results are included in the report as well as normative comparisons to other jurisdictions for the 2005 data.

### ***When Reviewing the Report There Are a Few Key Items to Keep In Mind:***

- ❑ For comparisons of similar questions between 2005 to 2003 or 2005 to 2001, the number that signifies statistical significance between years is a difference of four or more points.
- ❑ For normative comparisons of service ratings in 2005 for Rockville and the nation, differences of four or more points are considered statistically significant. When the differences between the ratings received and the normative comparisons are three points or less, they are considered to be “similar to the norm.” When the differences are four points or more, they are indicated as “above the norm” or “below the norm.”
- ❑ For those survey result items that do not include a bar (on the graph) that represents the national norm, normative data is not available. In this case it is usually because the question is not asked in at least five jurisdictions or the question asked differs from other municipalities and it is not possible to make a comparison.
- ❑ In 2005 residents were asked for the first time to rate both the quality and importance of several sets of items. For these sets of questions, the report contains a matrix that assigns services to either high quality (above the normative comparison) or of lower quality (similar to or below the norm) and by importance. Items classified as being of very high importance on the matrix were rated as “essential” or very “important” by over 80% or more of respondents, as high importance when rated as “essential” or “important” by 70-79% of respondents, and as lower importance when rated as “essential” or important” by less than 70% of respondents. In addition, there are tables throughout the report on these items that indicate (using percentages) from ascending to descending order the level of importance that residents assigned to a particular item. Knowing which services are most important to residents can be used to help establish budget priorities and make service adjustment decisions.

### ***Highlights of the 2005 Rockville Citizen Survey Results***

As in previous years, the 2005 citizen survey results are very positive. Rockville residents continue to give high marks to city services. Similar to 2003, the results have not varied much from the previous survey and are mostly “holding steady.” The following information will provide highlights of the results.

- ❑ There were 28 items that were above the national norms.
- ❑ There were 17 items that were similar to the national norms.
- ❑ There were 6 items that were below the norm.

Please refer to page one in the executive summary of the report for a full listing of items above, similar to, and below the norm.

While the City of Rockville fared well on the 2005 Citizen Survey, it is worth noting that the competition with other jurisdictions is becoming more intense. In 2003 there were approximately 300 jurisdictions in the NRC norms database. The number of participating jurisdictions in the database increased to approximately 480 in 2005, which is an increase



of 160%. This heightened competition is positive because it encourages jurisdictions to continue to strive for high performance and achieve the best results possible. Based on NRC's experience, they assume higher performing jurisdictions have a greater tendency to implement citizen surveys in their communities. NRC noted it is their perception that lower performing jurisdictions do not have the desire or the funding to implement citizen surveys in their communities.

### ***Quality of Life and Public Trust Ratings Above the Norm***

The following items pertaining to quality of life and public trust were rated above the normative comparison:

- ❑ Quality of life received a rating of 74. This is the same rating as in 2003 and is eight points above the norm.
- ❑ Overall quality of life in the neighborhood received a rating of 74. This is one point higher than 2003 and is six points above the national norm.
- ❑ Rockville as a place to raise children received a rating of 73. This is ten points higher than the norm and is up two points from 2003.
- ❑ The response to the statement "I receive good value for the taxes I pay" received a rating of 65, which is one point lower from 2003, and five points above the norm.
- ❑ The response to the statement "I am pleased with the overall direction that the City of Rockville is taking" received a rating of 66, which is one point higher than 2003, and is seven points above the norm.
- ❑ The response to the statement "The City welcomes citizen involvement" received a rating of 70, which is the same as 2003 and is eight points above the norm.

### ***City Service Ratings Above the Norm:***

The following is a sampling of City services that received ratings above the norm:

- ❑ The condition of streets received a rating of 65. This is two points higher than 2003 and is 14 points above the norm.
- ❑ Conditions of sidewalks received a rating of 60. This is two points lower than 2003 and is eleven points above the norm.
- ❑ Water and sewer services received a rating of 69, which is one point higher than 2003 and is six points above the norm.
- ❑ Rockville Senior Center programs and services received a rating of 74. This is two points higher than in 2003 and is 14 points above the norm.
- ❑ Rockville services to youth received a rating of 68, which is two points lower than 2003, and is 16 points above the norm.
- ❑ The accessibility of parks and recreation centers and facilities received a rating of 70, which is two points lower than 2003 and is nine points above the norm.
- ❑ Safety in the neighborhood during the day received a rating of 81, which is two points lower than 2003 and is six points above the norm.
- ❑ Safety in the business areas during the day received a rating of 83, which is three points lower than 2003 and is seven points above the norm.
- ❑ Residential code enforcement received a rating of 58, which is two points higher than 2003, and is 11 points above the norm.

- ❑ Commercial code enforcement received a rating of 59, which is one point higher than in 2003, and is twelve points above the norm.

### ***Improvements From the 2003 Survey***

The following items received higher ratings on the 2005 survey:

- ❑ Street repairs and maintenance received a rating of 58, which is up four points from 2003, is statistically significant, and is 9 points above the norm. This is an improvement from 2003 (54), when the ratings had dropped from 2001.
- ❑ Snow and ice removal received a rating of 66, which is up four points from 2003 (62), is statistically significant, and is seven points above the norm. This is increase over the 2003 rating that dropped from 2001.
- ❑ Appearance of City buildings received a rating of 69 which is two points higher than 2003 (67) and is one point below the norm. In terms of comparison to the norm, since this rating is within three points of the norm, it is considered to be similar to the norm. This is an improvement over the 2003 results where this item received a rating of 67, which was considered below the norm.
- ❑ The amount of information received about Rockville City government from Rockville Reports rose dramatically from 2003. 67% of respondents stated they get most or a lot of their information about the Rockville City government from the Rockville Reports, which is a 15% improvement and a statistically significant increase over the 2003 (52%) survey. Rockville Reports eclipsed the Rockville Gazette as the number one source of information about City Government for Rockville residents.
- ❑ The amount of information received about the Rockville City government from the Web Site increased from 2003. 19% of respondents reported they received most or a lot of their information from the City's Web Site which is an increase of 6% over 2003 results (13%) and is statistically significant.
- ❑ The percent of respondents reporting getting about the right amount of information about planned and ongoing developments and construction projects increased. 67% of respondents reported receiving the right amount of information about planned and ongoing developments, which is 7% increase over 2003 (60%) and is statistically significant. 61% of respondents reported receiving the right amount of information on construction projects which is 7% increase from 2003 and is statistically significant

### ***Importance of Programs and Services***

As referenced above, survey participants for the first time were asked on certain sets of questions to rate the importance in addition to the quality of City programs and services. These questions mostly related to Public Works and Recreation and Parks services. The following are highlights of the items that received the highest ratings of importance from residents (items appear from ascending to descending order):

- ❑ Survey respondents rated snow and ice removal with very high importance. 96% of respondents rated this service as essential or very important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rate the conditions of streets with very high importance. 94% of respondents rated this as essential or very important.

- ❑ Survey respondents rated tap water and water and sewer services with very high importance. 93% of respondents rated these services as essential or very important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rated the condition of sidewalks with very high importance. 88% of respondents rated it as essential or important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rate the safety of parks and recreation centers and facilities with very high importance. 87% of respondents rated these services as essential or very important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rated the enforcement of traffic laws with very high importance. 85% rated this as essential or very important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rated the conditions of park grounds with high importance. 75% rated this as essential or very important.
- ❑ Survey respondents rated the accessibility of parks and recreation centers and facilities with high importance. 72% of respondents rated this as essential or very important.
- ❑ Conditions of paths (bikes and walking trails) were rated with high importance. 72% of respondents rated this as essential or very important.

The importance ratings are another source of data that can help the City ascertain what services are most valued by Rockville residents. The data can also be used to assist the Mayor and Council in establishing budget priorities and in making spending choices.

### ***Items Rated Below the Norm***

There were a smaller number of items that are below the norm. These items warrant further review and analysis by departments:

- ❑ Access to affordable quality housing received a rating of 35, which is four points lower than 2003, and is twelve points below the norm. 32% rated the access to affordable quality housing as good or excellent.
- ❑ The overall building permit process received a rating of 49, which is the same as 2003, and is six points below the norm. However, the average rating for in person customer service of Inspections Services Division employees rose three points to 68. The average rating for customer service received by phone from Inspections Services Division employees rose two points to 65. Of the 13% of respondents who had contact with Inspections Services employees, 75% reported having a good or excellent experience.
- ❑ Utility billing received a rating of 60, which is two points lower than 2005, and is six points below the norm. 70% of respondents rated utility billing services as good or excellent.
- ❑ Tap water quality received a rating of 52, which was down two points from 2003, and is six points below the norm. 58% of respondents rated tap water services as good or excellent.
- ❑ Conditions of paths received a rating of 61, which is four points lower than 2003, and is seven points below the norm. 71% of respondents rated the conditions of paths as good or excellent.
- ❑ Ease of travel in Rockville by bicycle received a rating of 42, which is two points less than 2003, and is eight points below the norm. 39% of respondents rated the ease of travel in Rockville by bicycle as good or excellent.

### ***Items With Less Favorable Ratings Than 2003***

The following items received lower ratings on the 2005 survey and warrant further analysis and review by departments:

- ❑ The number of respondents who reported they watched a Rockville Mayor and Council meeting or other programming on The Rockville Channel (Cable Channel 11) in the past 12 months dropped from 44% in 2003 to 36% in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ Safety ratings for business areas after dark dropped from a rating of 58 in 2003 to a rating of 53 in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ Safety ratings for neighborhoods after dark dropped from a rating of 66 in 2003 to a rating of 62 in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds dropped from a rating of 72 in 2003 to a rating of 68 in 2005, which is statistically significant. However, the 2005 rating is fourteen points above the norm.
- ❑ The percent of respondents rating cut through traffic as a moderate, major, or extreme problem increased from 30% in 2003 to 34%, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ The percent of respondents who received most or a lot of information about the Rockville City government from the Recreation Guide dropped from 45% in 2003 to 38%, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ The average rating of special events dropped from 75 in 2003 to 71 in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ The average rating of the condition of park grounds declined from 71 in 2003 to 67 in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ The percent of respondents rating run down houses in their neighborhood as a moderate, major, or extreme problem increased from 11% in 2003 to 15% in 2005, which is statistically significant.
- ❑ The average rating of street trees declined from 64 in 2003 to 59 in 2005, which is statistically significant.

### ***Making Use of the 2005 Survey Results***

Staff has also prepared the 2005 Citizen Survey Implementation Plan (Attachment B). This document will guide how departments will make use of the valuable survey data that has been collected.

Each department will closely examine their survey data on programs and services for the 2005 results and will compare them to previous years. The results of this analysis will determine which areas need enhancements and adjustments. Departments as necessary will conduct in depth investigations in areas where there were statistically significant drops or scores below the norm. Departments will develop action plans outlining what specific changes will be made to improve or enhance a program or a service to increase the ratings in on the 2007 Citizen Survey. Another important component of the implementation plan is the communication of the 2005 survey results to residents and City employees. Staff will begin this work immediately after the Worksession. The Mayor and Council will have an opportunity to comment on the 2005 Citizen Survey implementation plan and ask questions.



The Citizen Survey project has been added to the project management quarterly tracking system. The July 2005 update will include a Citizen Survey project sheet and pertinent action items and milestones that will be reported on regularly. As part of this process, staff will submit a 2005 Citizen Survey update in September of 2005, which will include the results of the department's analysis of the survey results and copies of their 2005 Citizen Survey Action Plans.

Staff is available to answer any questions the Mayor and Council may have about this memorandum.

## 2005 Rockville Citizen Survey Implementation Plan

The latest Citizen Survey report of results has yielded a host of important data and information about citizen perceptions pertaining to City services and the quality of life in Rockville. These results are unique in that it is the most comprehensive source of information about citizen satisfaction. Although the survey is only one of a number of ways that the City gathers data from its customers, it is the only data taken from a scientific random selection of citizens that is representative of the entire Rockville population. The following action plan will guide how Rockville will use the results of the 2005 Citizen Survey:

### **Departmental Review of Results**

Copies of the report will be distributed to senior staff and they will review the results of their respective departments. Senior staff will also distribute the report to key staff in the departments for review and input. All employees who are interested in reviewing the report will have an opportunity to read it on-line on the City's Web Site. Each department will:

- ❑ Compare the 2005 results with the 2003 results. This will include assessing whether intended improvements and changes to programs yielded better results on the 2005 survey.
- ❑ Examine the results for all survey years (2001, 2003, and 2005) to identify if any trends are emerging that may need further attention.
- ❑ Review results for new questions that were not asked in 2003 (if applicable).
- ❑ If there is statistically significant movement in either direction, staff will identify program and service areas that are in need of adjustments and changes.
- ❑ Departments will also identify any program or service area where more digging is needed to find out the "why" behind the results. The data from the citizen surveys indicate the "what" or how people feel at a snapshot in time, but the results do not tell us "why" they feel that way. Departments may want to conduct activities that would extract this next level of information by conducting focus groups, designing a more intensive survey that would ask specific questions about a program or service, or may elect to conduct research aimed at finding out the root cause of why citizens may have rated a particular program or service in a certain way.
- ❑ Departments will develop action plans that will outline what specific changes will be made to improve or enhance a program or a service so as to increase the ratings in the 2005 survey. The action plans also may include ideas and strategies that led to high ratings in a program area that could be carried over into another program area and bring improvement. The action plans will be forwarded to the City Manager for his approval, and will be reviewed at Quarterly Operation Review meetings.
- ❑ Departments will make changes as outlined in their action plans and will monitor the effects of the changes.
- ❑ Departments will begin to plan for the next survey by thinking about issues or items that should be added to or modified in the 2007 survey.
- ❑ Departments will measure their efforts by the results of the 2007 survey.

### **Written Comments**

The 2003 survey provided citizens with the opportunity to provide any written comments that they wished to include. A large amount of comments were given and are included in the survey report. The following will be done with this qualitative data:

- ❑ The project manager will sort the comments by department and distribute them to the departments.
- ❑ The Departments will review the comments and respond and follow-up on items as necessary.
- ❑ Individuals that provided contact information in their comment will be contacted by department staff.
- ❑ This data will be used in conjunction with the quantitative data in that it may provide some of the “why’s” to the “what’s” that are identified as needing improvement or that have been rated very well.

### **Performance Measures**

The completion of the citizen survey enables departments to complete their performance measurement data for FY05.

- ❑ This data will be included in the adopted FY06 budget.
- ❑ The survey data will be used to assist departments in setting their performance measurement targets for FY07.

### **Budget Application**

The data can be used in conjunction with other sources by departments, the City Manager, and the Mayor and Council in:

- ❑ Assessing program effectiveness.
- ❑ Making decisions about levels of funding for programs.
- ❑ Making decisions on program adjustments.

### **Communication of the Survey Results**

There are a variety of ways that the survey results will be communicated to staff and to the citizens:

- ❑ Feature article in Rockville Reports about the survey results.
- ❑ Feature article in City Signals on the survey results and highlights the very positive ratings given to staff and City services, and identifies areas for improvement.
- ❑ Press release will be sent to all major media outlets in the local area.
- ❑ Project Manager will do a Cityline interview, which will focus on the results of the survey, and how the City is going to make use of them.
- ❑ Post the entire survey report of results on the City’s Web Site and have hard copies available at City Hall for public distribution.
- ❑ Post factoids on the positive results of the survey on I-Rock for staff to visit and learn about.
- ❑ Survey data will be used in the Customer Service effort to assess how the City’s customer service ratings are faring over time and as a guide as to where changes are needed.
- ❑ Staff appreciation activity to thank employees for their hard work and commitment, will be held (one at City Hall and one at the Gude Maintenance facility).